

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou)
Course Syllabus

English Language for University Studies

UCUG 1051

3 credits

Pre-requisites: Gaokao English Language Score 130 or above; or IELTS Band 6.0 overall with all sub scores at 6.0 or above; or IELTS Band 6.5 (overall) with some but not all subscores at or above 6.0; or HKDSE English Language Level 3 (overall) with all subscores at or above Level 3; or HKDSE English Language Level 4 (overall) or HKDSE English Language Level 5 (overall) with some but not all subscores at or above level 4; or equivalence of the above.

Exclusion: UCUG 1050

Instructor

Name:

Email:

Office hours:

Room:

Course Description

This course aims for students in their first year of study and will develop students' spoken and written language proficiency. The course also introduces academic literacy skills common to all disciplines. Students will learn to evaluate others' opinions, develop strong arguments and communicate those arguments effectively in written and spoken English. In addition to traditional academic writing, the course includes elements of academic communication that go beyond the text level to incorporate academic communication that includes text and audio. They will also build skills and habits for self-directed learning at university.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and Core Areas for Learning (CAfLs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to / capable of:

ILO 1. (Language Development)

- a. select language appropriate for the audience, context, and purpose, in spoken and written contexts;
- b. express complex ideas precisely with range and complexity in vocabulary and sentence structures, and develop clear pronunciation
- c. elaborate, substantiate, and organize logical ideas into clear central points/theses and perspectives in speaking and writing
- d. interact with others' ideas to contribute and communicate in group contexts
- e. analyze different audiences for different purposes, and apply strategies to inform, interest, and persuade an audience

ILO 2. (Academic Literacy)

- f. critique ideas, analyze problems, evaluate solutions, and consider multiple perspectives in speaking and writing
- g. find, evaluate, and use appropriate sources and citations to support ideas, integrate ideas from multiple sources to build central ideas/theses, and paraphrase sources effectively

ILO 3. (Lifelong Learning)

- h. apply learning strategies including goal setting, evaluating learning strategies and resources, and self-reflection to become an effective learner

CAfL 1. (Language Form and Accuracy)

Written Language (WL) and Spoken Language (SL) – including selecting language appropriate for the audience, context, and purpose; expressing ideas appropriately with range and complexity in vocabulary

and sentence structures; recognizing errors; proofreading and editing skills; and developing clear pronunciation

CAfL 2. (Language Meaning)

Substance (SU) and Coherence (CO) – including strategies for elaborating, substantiating, and organizing ideas logically in speaking and writing

CAfL 3. (Language Use)

Interaction (IN) – including strategies to keep a discussion going and move it forward constructively

CAfL 4. (Lifelong Learning)

Being an Effective Learner (EL) – including proactive practices such as goal setting, identifying language strengths and weaknesses, and evaluating learning strategies

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Final marks will be converted to letter grades using the approved grading scale. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation. Complete task instructions and submission details are provided on the Canvas course page.

Assessments

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Speaking Task 1	25%	Week 6-7 **
Speaking Task 2	20%	Week 12-13 **
Writing Task	35%	05/12/2025 *
Self-Directed Learning 1	3%	Week 4 °
Self-Directed Learning 2	3%	Week 9 °
Self-Directed Learning 3	3%	Week 10 °
Self-Directed Learning 4	3%	Week 11 °
SDL Elective	3%	05/12/2025°
Reflective Task	5%	05/12/2025°

* Marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

° Exact dates will be provided on Canvas for each course section separately.

° Assessed on completion.

Mapping of Course ILOs and CAfLs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs and CAfLs	Explanation
Speaking Task 1	ILO 1, 2, 3 Spoken language (SL) Interaction (IN) Communication: Language meaning (CO) (SU) Communication: Language accuracy & form (SL) (WL) Communication: Language use (IN)	Part 1 – Spoken Monologue (5% on SL - Pronunciation and Use of voice only) Part 2 – Group Discussion (5% on SL - Usage and accuracy of vocabulary, grammar and style only, and 15% on IN) This task assesses students’ ability to explain and apply concepts of appropriate spoken and written language, features of language style such as hedging and strong verbs (ILO 1), evaluate the implications of the proposed ideas and the sources that support them, synthesize a well-argued solution (ILO 2), and critically reflect on the learning strategies for sustained intellectual development (ILO 3).
Speaking Task 2	ILO 2, 3 Spoken language (SL)	Short Speech (10% on SL and 10% on CO)

	Coherence (CO) Communication: Language meaning (CO) (SU) Communication: Language accuracy & form (SL) (WL) Communication: Language use (IN)	The short speech assesses students' ability to apply appropriate spoken language and style, synthesize multiple sources to generate coherent pieces of argument (ILO 2), demonstrate higher-order thinking skills of analysis and evaluation (ILO 2), critically evaluate own learning strategies including goal setting and problem solving (ILO 3).
Writing Task	ILO 2, 3 Written language (WL) Coherence (CO) Substance (SU) Communication: Language meaning (CO) (SU) Communication: Language accuracy & form (SL) (WL) Communication: Language use (IN)	Short Essay (5% on WL, 15% on CO and 15% on SU) The written work assesses students' ability to apply appropriate written language and style, synthesize multiple sources to generate coherent pieces of argument (ILO 2), demonstrate higher-order thinking skills of analysis and evaluation (ILO 2), critically evaluate own learning strategies including goal setting and problem solving (ILO 3).
Self-Directed Learning: 4 x SDL Tasks Elective Reflective Task	ILO 1, 2, 3 Personal Development – lifelong learning: Being an Effective Learner (EL)	Assessed on completion These tasks help students develop ability to integrate learning skills across the CAfLs (ILO 1 & 2), critically evaluate their learning strategies including goal setting and problem solving (ILO 3) and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills of analysis and evaluation (ILO2).

Lesson Topics and Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

Unit/Lesson	Topic	Outcome
Unit 1 Lesson 1	Course introduction	Better understand the requirements and expectations of the course. Contribute to a positive learning atmosphere.
Unit 1 Lesson 2	Learning at university	Understand and analyze individual learning needs at university. Identify possible solutions and personalize them.
Unit 1 Lesson 3	Language learning at university	Identify effective learning strategies and resources to work towards specific language learning goals. Appreciate the importance of vocabulary development at university.
Unit 1 Lesson 4	Using appropriate language and style	Understand the importance of thinking critically about the audience, context and purpose of communication to select appropriate language and features of language style to meet audience expectations. Understand the importance of hedging and verb choice to communicate precise ideas.

Unit 2 Lesson 1	Introduction to academic discussions	Recognize constructive discussion skills to move the discussion forward. Apply suitable discussion phrases for connecting ideas in discussions. Contribute new ideas to a discussion.
Unit 2 Lesson 2	Introduction to academic discussions (cont.)	Recognize the constructive discussion skill of asking open-ended questions to move the discussion forward. Apply suitable discussion phrases for speculating and expressing opinions cautiously in discussions.
Unit 2 Lesson 3	Practicing academic discussions	Analyse, participate in, and reflect on interaction in an academic discussion.
Unit 2 Lesson 4	Academic discussions: Developing ideas and perspectives	Recognize constructive discussion skills of using data and sources to move the discussion forward. Recognize appropriate language to cite ideas from sources in speaking.
Unit 2 Lesson 5	Academic discussions: Developing ideas and perspectives (cont.)	Recognize constructive discussion skills of using expert opinions to move the discussion forward. Apply suitable discussion phrases for expressing agreement and disagreement in discussions.
Unit 2 Lesson 6	Academic discussions: Feedback giving and participating in group discussions	Actively seek, provide and act on specific constructive feedback on discussions. Use spoken language effectively to express opinions and selecting phrases for the role(s) you adopt in a discussion.
Unit 3 Lesson 1	Writing at university: Exploring different problems	Identify, analyze and explore different perspectives to support central idea(s). Use written language to write effective thesis statements.
Unit 3 Lesson 2	Writing at university: Paragraph development	Apply suitable organization sentence patterns for clear topic sentences and organized paragraphs.
Unit 3 Lesson 3	Writing at university: Summarizing and paraphrasing sources	Apply strategies for paraphrasing and summarizing sources in writing to substantiate ideas. Understand the importance of range in vocabulary and sentence structures for producing effective paraphrases.
Unit 3 Lesson 4	Writing at university: Producing coherent texts	Organize ideas at text and section level. Recognize a range of cohesive devices that help develop sentence structure complexity.
Unit 3 Lesson 5	Writing at university: Producing coherent texts (cont.)	Recognize the key features of appropriate academic tone and style.

		Develop and organize coherent ideas at text and section level. Analyse and critique an AI generated essay outline.
Unit 3 Lesson 6	Writing at university: Using appropriate language and style	Analyse, compare and justify problems. Recognize features of appropriate academic tone and style. Use GenAI to generate feedback. Apply skills in practice.
Unit 3 Lesson 7	Writing at university: Using appropriate language and style (cont.)	Recognize and apply features of appropriate academic tone and style.
Unit 3 Lesson 8	Speaking at university: Preparing and organizing a speech	Understand the importance of signposting ideas to help the audience follow. Recognize useful expressions for and functions of signposting ideas in a talk.
Unit 3 Lesson 9	Speaking at university: Using voice to engage an audience	Understand the importance of effective vocal delivery in engaging an audience. Apply strategies to develop and practice effective vocal delivery.

Grading Rubrics

	Speaking Task 1	Speaking Task 2	Writing Task
Excellent	Demonstrates exceptional clarity and fluency in speech, presenting ideas with confidence and precision. Engages actively and constructively in group discussions, contributing valuable insights and facilitating collaboration.	Delivers a highly coherent and engaging speech, demonstrating outstanding command of language and subject matter. Exhibits exceptional critical thinking, analysis, and creativity in content, with well-supported arguments. Shows remarkable confidence and poise, effectively engaging the audience.	Produces a well-researched, coherent, and original piece of writing, demonstrating exceptional command of language and structure. Exhibits depth of analysis, critical thinking, and creativity, with arguments supported by robust evidence.
Good	Communicates ideas clearly and effectively, showing good command of language. Participates actively in group discussions, offering relevant contributions and demonstrating willingness to consider others' viewpoints.	Gives a clear and structured speech, showing good understanding and control of language. Demonstrates solid analytical and critical thinking skills, with arguments that are logical and supported by evidence. Maintains a good level of audience engagement through confident delivery.	Writes a clear, well-structured piece, showing good command of language and understanding of the topic. Demonstrates solid analytical skills and the ability to develop logical arguments, supported by appropriate evidence. Meets all task requirements, with writing that shows effort and a keen interest in the subject.
Satisfactory	Communicates with adequate clarity but may show occasional hesitancy or inaccuracies. Contributes to group discussions but may be less consistent in offering	Delivers an adequately structured speech, with some clarity and command of language. Shows basic analytical and critical thinking abilities but arguments may	Produces a piece of writing that meets basic requirements, with adequate organization and language control. Shows some analytical and critical thinking

	insights or facilitating dialogue.	lack depth and/or originality. Exhibits moderate confidence, managing to convey messages but with less engagement.	ability but arguments may lack depth and/or originality. Fulfills the task, but the writing may lack ambition or insight, sticking closely to basic requirements.
Marginal Pass	Speech may be marked by frequent hesitations, inaccuracies, or lack of fluency, but conveys basic ideas. Participates in group discussions minimally, offering few insights and limited engagement with others' ideas.	Speech may lack clear structure or coherence, with noticeable difficulties in language control. Demonstrates limited critical thinking and analytical skills, with arguments that are weakly supported. Shows low confidence and struggles to engage the audience.	Writes a basic, minimally coherent piece, struggling with language accuracy and structure. Demonstrates limited analytical or critical thinking, with weak arguments and minimal evidence. Barely meets the task requirements, showing little understanding or engagement with the topic.
Fail	Lacks clarity and fluency, struggling significantly to express ideas or engage in discussions. Shows minimal participation in group discussions, contributing little to no valuable insights.	Fails to deliver a coherent speech, with significant language inaccuracies and lack of clarity. Shows very poor or no critical thinking and analytical skills, with incoherent or unsupported arguments. Lacks confidence and fails to engage the audience, significantly hindering communication.	Fails to produce a coherent piece of writing, marked by significant language inaccuracies and lack of structure. Shows very poor or no understanding of the task, with incoherent arguments and no evidence of analysis or critical thinking. Does not meet the task requirements, showing minimal effort and understanding of the subject matter.

Final Grade Descriptors

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	An excellent performance in this course would involve demonstrating exceptional clarity and fluency in speech, engaging actively in discussions, presenting coherent and engaging speeches with outstanding command of language and subject matter, and producing well-researched, coherent, and original writing with depth of analysis and critical thinking. Overall, the individual would exhibit confidence, creativity, and a strong ability to support arguments, with evidence across all tasks.
B	Good Performance	A good performance would involve effectively communicating ideas with clarity and a strong command of language, actively participating in discussions with relevant contributions and critical thinking skills, delivering clear and structured speeches with logical arguments supported by evidence, and writing well-structured pieces with solid analytical skills and appropriate evidence. Overall, the individual would demonstrate a good level of language proficiency, critical thinking abilities, and the capacity to construct coherent arguments across all tasks, showing effort and interest in the subject matter.
C	Satisfactory Performance	A satisfactory performance would involve communicating with adequate clarity, contributing to discussions with some critical thinking abilities, delivering adequately structured speeches and writing pieces that meet basic requirements with some analytical thinking. The individual would demonstrate moderate confidence in their communication, but may lack depth or originality in their arguments, both in speaking and writing tasks.
D	Marginal Pass	A marginal pass performance would involve delivering speeches and writing pieces with basic ideas and minimal coherence, struggling with language accuracy and structure. The individual would demonstrate limited critical

		thinking and analytical skills, weak arguments, and minimal evidence, along with low confidence and struggling to engage with the audience. Overall, the performance would barely meet the task requirements, showing little understanding or engagement with the subject matter across all tasks.
F	Fail	A failing grade would involve struggling significantly to express ideas clearly and engage in discussions, contributing little to group conversations, and showing minimal critical thinking abilities or ability to construct basic arguments. The individual would fail to deliver coherent speeches, evidenced by significant language inaccuracies, lack of clarity, and incoherent or unsupported arguments, along with producing incoherent written pieces with significant language inaccuracies and lack of structure, failing to meet task requirements or show any understanding or effort in the subject matter. Overall, the performance throughout the course would lack engagement, clarity, coherence, and critical thinking across all tasks.

Course AI Policy

Approach to GenAI in this course:

The PLE at HKUST(GZ) embraces innovation and technology in teaching. Consistent with the broader approach of HKUST, the PLE recognizes GenAI as the direction of the future. Therefore, responsible use of GenAI is strongly encouraged to help students optimize their learning potential.

The PLE adopts pedagogical principles suitable for high-quality university education at HKUST(GZ) and upholds a commitment to ethics and academic integrity. Ethical principles are manifested through honesty, clarity, and transparency. Given that we are all in the process of learning how to utilize this new tool, it is imperative that everyone, including students and teachers, approach the use of GenAI with complete openness.

When employing GenAI as a novel learning tool and resource, students are expected to adhere to the standards outlined in the HKUST(GZ) Undergraduate Student Handbook and the PLE Handbook to ensure academic integrity. The following uses are permitted only if declared in writing and within task-approved boundaries:

- Brainstorming ideas – Using AI to generate potential topics or arguments for inspiration; final content must be student’s own.
- Practising conversation – Using AI chatbots to rehearse dialogues or simulate roleplay; AI responses may not be copied verbatim into assessed work.
- Grammar and spell checks (declared) – Using tools to correct surface-level language errors; substantive rewriting without attribution is not permitted.
- Short-phrase translations – Translating words or short phrases; translating large sections or entire works requires approval.
- Any other AI use must be checked with the course instructor. Unapproved or undeclared use may be considered misconduct.

In order to foster transparency and accountability in the use of AI, it is strongly encouraged that students engage in critical thinking and openly communicate about their usage of GenAI tools. Students who use GenAI tools to complete their assignments should declare their usage and provide a clear explanation of how they employed the tool when completing and submitting their assignments. This includes formal declarations of GenAI use/non-use designated for specific tasks within this course: Speaking Task 1 & Speaking Task 2 and Writing Task. For students who have used GenAI in the tasks, they should provide a folder containing both the final text and screenshots of GenAI use that include the original draft of any required text (bullet points or brief notes for the Speaking Tasks and blog post for the Writing Task) and the prompts they used. For students who have not used GenAI, they should include the following declaration below their text: *"I declare that no content generated or revised by AI has been used in this task. I understand that AI can be used as a*

tool and is not a substitute for doing my own work. I accept that any violation of academic integrity policies may entail academic consequences, including lowering my grade for this assessment."

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include strengths such as organization and delivery, room for improvements on use of language and style, coherence, argument depth with evidence use, and actionable solutions, with the specific form and content of the feedback at the instructor's discretion. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Resubmission Policy

Once the assignment has been marked, no resubmission is permitted.

Required Texts and Materials

Required texts and other materials are provided through the Canvas course page.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy, including upholding HKUST(GZ)'s Academic Honor Code and maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance for academic misconduct. Please refer to Regulations for Academic Integrity and Student Conduct for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.